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Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009

Letter dated 7 March 2008 from the Permanent Representatives of Antigua and Barbuda and Cuba to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

In our capacity as Co-Chairs of the Joint Coordination Committee (Group of 77 and China and the Non-Aligned Movement), we have the honour to enclose herewith a copy of the letter sent to the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. B. Lynn Pascoe, conveying the points of view of our groupings regarding your proposal for strengthening the Department of Political Affairs (see annex).

We request that the above-mentioned document be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 128.

(*Signed*) John William **Ashe**
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Permanent Representative of Antigua and Barbuda to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Rodrigo **Malmierca Díaz**
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Cuba to the United Nations

08-26619 (E) 110308

Annex to the letter dated 7 March 2008 from the Permanent Representatives of Antigua and Barbuda and Cuba to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

We have the honour to address this letter to you, on behalf of the Joint Coordination Committee (Group of 77 and China and the Non-Aligned Movement) regarding the report of the Secretary-General on the strengthening of the Department of Political Affairs.

The Joint Coordination Committee attaches great importance to the strengthening of the United Nations and efforts should continue to be made to develop the Organization's full potential on the basis of priorities and mandates approved by Member States.

A reformed United Nations must be responsive to the entire membership, faithful to its founding principles and adapted to carrying out its mandate. The success of United Nations reform can only be judged in terms of a collective assessment of the potential improvements in the functioning of the Organization while preserving the interests of all countries, including developing countries. A stronger United Nations that responds more effectively to their collective needs is in our common interest.

The Joint Coordination Committee would like to reaffirm the role of General Assembly and its Fifth Committee in considering and deciding on all financial and human resources requirements and policies, and the structure of the Secretariat.

The Joint Coordination Committee shares the view that improving the United Nations capacity to prevent and resolve conflicts is a better investment than dealing with the costly aftermath of wars and armed conflicts. Clearly, prevention of conflict is key to the Organization's Charter obligation to maintain international peace and security.

Any effort to enhance the role of the United Nations in preventing conflict should take into account the need for balance and comprehensiveness, in accordance with its Charter and international law, in order to enhance conflict prevention and resolution and post-conflict peacebuilding strategies with the aim of achieving sustained economic growth and sustainable development.

In this context, the Joint Coordination Committee takes the opportunity to reiterate that it expects to receive as soon as possible, for its consideration, the Secretary-General's proposals regarding reform of the development pillar of the Organization.

The objective of strengthening and rationalization of the Department of Political Affairs, including its supportive role regarding conflict prevention and resolution, is to improve the Department's effectiveness and efficiency in fulfilling its mandate.

The Joint Coordination Committee believes that the Department of Political Affairs has no mandate other than those provided by relevant resolutions and decisions of the United Nations. Therefore, any adjustment of the Department's mandate requires further decision of the Member States.

The Joint Coordination Committee has carefully considered the report of the Secretary-General as contained in document A/62/521, and while supporting some elements of the proposals it has also important concerns.

The Joint Coordination Committee is disappointed that the views, priorities and role of developing countries, including their contribution to conflict prevention and resolution, are not adequately reflected in the report.

We note that some proposals in the report lack detailed information. To allow Member States to make an informed decision, more clarification is highly appreciated.

For example, we have concerns regarding the establishment and nature of the proposed regional offices. We stress that these offices can only be established with the full support of all Member States concerned and with an appropriate mandate approved by the General Assembly.

The Joint Coordination Committee takes note of the Under-Secretary-General's clarification on the regional offices on 13 February 2008, and would like to stress its general position as follows: (1) the establishment of any regional office should seek prior consent of the host country and all countries in the region; (2) the Member States will decide on the establishment of regional offices on a case-by-case basis; (3) a regional office cannot have an extraterritorial mandate, i.e. a mandate extending beyond the countries of that region; and (4) taking into account the different nature of various regions, there is no uniform formula for the establishment of the regional offices.

The Joint Coordination Committee expects that in due time the Secretariat will provide detailed information, among other things, on the following elements:

- The mandates under which any proposed office will operate, as well as the appropriate means and tools available to them to manage and sustain peace and to prevent the eruption of new conflicts.
- The type and nature of the relationship between the regional offices and the authorities of the host and concerned countries, on one hand, and these offices and the regional and subregional organizations, on the other hand.
- Process of interaction between these offices and the other United Nations entities present in the field.
- Reports to be produced by these offices and how the reports would be used by the Department of Political Affairs.
- Mandates of the Department of Political Affairs regarding cross-cutting issues, bearing in mind that the majority of these issues are dealt with by relevant United Nations bodies. In this context, it would be appreciated if politically sound clarifications, including the relevant mandates approved by Member States, could be provided with regard to the Department of Political Affairs's expansion of functions and mandates in the area of cross-cutting issues.

The Joint Coordination Committee also has concerns, among other things, regarding some of the proposals for restructuring the regional divisions within the Department of Political Affairs.

We also reiterate the importance of the principle of equitable geographical representation regarding any decision taken by the Secretariat in terms of human resources, so as to ameliorate the current geographic imbalance in the Secretariat.

In conclusion, the Joint Coordination Committee requests the Secretariat kindly to issue a corrigendum to the aforementioned report reflecting the comments and concerns of the Member States. This would be the most effective and easy way to move forward on this process and to avoid other more complex scenarios. After the corrigendum is issued, the technical aspects of the proposal could be discussed within the Fifth Committee.

Attached to the present document there is a list of the concrete modifications to the report contained in document A/62/521 that the Joint Coordination Committee expects to see reflected in the corrigendum.

The Joint Coordination Committee is ready to continue working on this issue with a constructive approach and a spirit of cooperation and hopes that its views will be duly taken into account so as to facilitate a successful outcome of this process.

(*Signed*) John William **Ashe**
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Permanent Representative of Antigua and Barbuda to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Rodrigo **Malmierca Díaz**
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Cuba to the United Nations

Attachment

Proposals for a corrigendum to the report of the Secretary-General as contained in document A/62/521

Paragraph 4

Add in line 6 after "strengthening of the DPA", the following: **"as well as the development architecture..."**

Delete in line 6 the word **"*vital*"**.

Delete in line 8 "*in the area of peace and security*".

Paragraph 5

Delete in line 2 "*field oriented and*"...

Delete in line 9 "*full collaboration of Member States*" and replace by **"prior consent of the concerned Member States and approval of the General Assembly**"...

Add in line 10 after "regional offices": **"in Central Africa, West Africa, the Great Lakes and the Horn of Africa"**.

Paragraph 13

Delete in line 9 *"when and where the need arises"* and replace by **"upon their request"**.

Paragraph 14 (e)

Add in line 2 after "regional offices": **"in Central Africa, West Africa, the Great Lakes and the Horn of Africa"**

Delete in line 5 *"after dialogue with and agreement of Member States and regional organizations"* and replace by **"with the full support and agreement of the Member States concerned, after dialogue with regional organizations and with an appropriate mandate from the General Assembly"**.

Delete last sentence of the paragraph: "*They would replace, when appropriate and only in consultation with all relevant partners, single country political missions which have a more limited focus*".

Delete in line 11 "*United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)*".

Delete in line 12 "*agencies, funds and programme offices*".

Paragraph 67

Delete in the last line *"significantly"* and replace by **"proportionately"**.

Paragraph 113

Delete the second sentence of the paragraph *"This would allow the current Officer at the P-4 level to focus on Morocco and the Western Sahara, ensuring better support to the Personal Envoy for Western Sahara and the development of strategies and recommendations for implementation of Security Council resolution 1754 (2007)".*

Section D Middle East and West Asia Division (paragraphs 120 – 152)

- The name of the Middle East and West Asia Division should be Middle East Division.
- The Division should not be divided to several units.
- The Division should comprise Arab Middle Eastern countries in the African continent.
- Inclusion of all United Nations basic relevant resolutions and references on the Middle East, including the following most important resolutions, 242 (1967), 338 (1974), 497 (1981).
- Inclusion of a clear reference to Security Council Resolution 425 (1978) concerning Lebanon.
- Reference to the return of all the occupied Arab territories.
- The work of the Quartet should include all tracks of the Middle East peace process and not only the Palestinian-Israeli track.
- Not linking the Syrian Arab Republic to the Security Council Resolution 1701 (2006).

Gulf Section (Paragraph 139 through 152)

We have strong reservations on the title and content of this Section.

Paragraph 148

Delete in line 6 the word *"modernization".*

Paragraph 168

Delete in line 6 *"South Asia".*

Delete in lines 7 and 8 *"several countries (Pakistan, India, Bhutan)".*

Paragraph 171

Delete from line 4 to 8 the following: *"United Nations policy regarding South Asia. The Officer would also liaise with civil society, including non-governmental*

organizations and academic institutions, to build a network of information collection and exchange. He/she would monitor and report developments across South Asia and assist".

Paragraph 173

In paragraph 173 the Secretary General proposes to establish a new North-East Asia Unit in the East Asia and Pacific Section of the Asian and Pacific Division. Meanwhile, we've noted the ACABQ cautions against the fragmentation of the regional divisions into a multiplicity of units, and the comments that it would be more efficient to deal with issues in an integrated manner instead of on a country-specific basis. Taking into account the ongoing process carried out by major stakeholders in the North-East Asia, we are not convinced that the said unit, with its vague mandate as contained in the report, is necessary to be established.

Paragraph 189

Delete the whole paragraph.

Paragraph 195

Delete in line 2 the word "*civil*".

Delete the second sentence: *"The new Central America/Mexico Section would continue to work with Governments to strengthen conflict prevention mechanisms and monitor developments in the subregion, still assailed by destabilizing factors, such as transnational organized crime, drug trafficking and gang violence".*

Paragraph 198

Delete in the last sentence the phrase: *"relating to conflict prevention, peacemaking, peacebuilding and other issues in his/her areas of assignment".*

Paragraph 200

Delete in lines 5 and 6 *"relating to conflict prevention, peacemaking, peacebuilding and other issues…."*

Paragraph 201

Delete in line 7 *"and participate in the planning of strategies and development of policy advice relating to conflict prevention, peacemaking, peacebuilding and other issues…."*

Paragraph 202

Delete second sentence: *"It would also permit forward-thinking on critical subregional issues, as well as on key political developments".*

Paragraph 203

Delete last sentence: *"He/she would monitor and assess political developments in assigned countries in the subregion in order to provide the Secretary-General and*

senior Secretariat officials with early warning and policy options for conflict prevention, peacemaking and post-conflict peacebuilding".

Para 205:

Delete in the last sentence *"and participate in the planning of strategies and development of policy advice relating to conflict prevention, peacemaking, peacebuilding and other issues…."*

Paragraph 206

Delete in the third line *"a permanent member of the Security Council".*

Paragraph 207

Delete *"to emerging regional leadership in the hemisphere, such as Argentina, Brazil and Chile"* and replace by ***" to the more important political presence of the sub-region in the hemisphere."***

Paragraph 249

Delete from line 9 to the end of the paragraph the following: *"The list of issues is almost unlimited: in addition to the existing ones, such as democracy, terrorism, conflict prevention, human rights, rule of law and natural resources and conflict, there is a plethora of emerging global issues on which political analysis and advice are required, including, for instance, transnational organized crime, corruption, the politics of land, narcotrafficking, climate change and security, radical ideology and fundamentalism, and migration. Issues such as gender have also acquired higher corporate priority. Although there are dedicated United Nations agencies, funds and programmes responsible for some of these issues, the Department is routinely called upon to provide analysis and advice on their political implications, which in many cases contribute directly to conflict."*

Paragraph 258

Delete in the second sentence the following: *"….for which they are mandated focal points, namely peacebuilding, terrorism, and democracy and rule of law. They would also continue to provide advice on the political dimensions of the many existing and emerging global issues that fall to the Unit, including constitution-making, responsibility to protect, human rights, transitional justice, gender, transnational organized crime, corruption, the politics of land, narcotrafficking, climate change and security, radical ideology and fundamentalism, and migration"*

Delete in sentence 4 the following:
"..UNDP, OHCHR,.."
"..and the World Bank, as well as important external partners, such as the Inter-Parliamentary Union..".

Delete in sentence 3 from the bottom the following: *"..such as the Department of Political Affairs-UNDP Joint Programme, the United Nations Democracy Fund Programme Consultative Board, the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force and the United Nations Dialogue with the Global South".*

Paragraph 259

Delete the last sentence *"For example, the Committee has recently taken up a number of cross-cutting issues (such as responsibility to protect and democratization) and prevention initiatives, both of which come under the responsibility of the Policy and Partnerships Unit. The increased connection ensures better usage of and improved preparation for the Committee."*

Paragraph 280

Delete in the third sentence: "*and the Andes*".

Paragraph 281

Delete in line 4: *"welcome by Member States and regional organizations"* and replace by: **"established by the GA and with the full agreement of the concerned Member States and, where appropriate, pertinent consultations with regional organizations,"**...

Add in line 5 after "approach": **"in Central Africa, West Africa, the Great Lakes and the Horn of Africa"**

Delete last sentence: *"In-field capacity would also strengthen a "One UN" approach by facilitating the provision of political advice to United Nations country teams, regional economic commissions and Resident Coordinators on the ground where they operate, especially when combined with more frequent visits by Headquarters staff and improved use of existing mechanisms (such as the Executive Committee on Peace and Security) to ensure coordination at the Headquarters level".*

Paragraph 283

Delete in the second sentence "*consultations with legislative authority and in close consultation with Member States and regional organizations of the regions in question"* and replace by **"and after consent of the concerned Member States and approval of the General Assembly, in Central Africa, West Africa, the Great Lakes and the Horn of Africa"**.

Delete the last sentence: "*One of the benefits of such a network, as indicated in the example already provided of Central Asia, is that it provides a low-cost safety net, enabling the Member States to phase out some long-standing special political and peacebuilding missions, while retaining a continued United Nations political presence that can provide political support, preventive diplomacy and good offices, as needed, as countries and regional organizations work through the peacebuilding process".*

Paragraph 288

Add in line 8 after the word "serve" the following phrase **"in coordination with the concerned government"**.

Paragraph 290

Delete the whole paragraph and replace it by the following: **"Going forward, the Secretary General is considering the establishment of similar offices in the Horn of Africa and Southeast Asia. As stated earlier, the establishment of any regional office would depend on the status of the existing operations on the ground dealing with peace and security, the views and agreement of Member States and regional organizations in the area of focus and approval by the General Assembly".**

Subprogramme 3 Security Council Affairs /paragraphs 305-314)

We have reservations on the approach taken in the whole section and the soundness of its line of reasoning. Proliferation of sanctions without examining its usefulness can not be a convincing reason to ask for more financial and human resources. We need more information to be able to decide on the proposals on this section.

United Nations A/C.5/62/25

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Programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009

Letter dated 12 March 2008 from the Secretary-General addressed to the Permanent Representatives of Antigua and Barbuda and Cuba to the United Nations

I wish to thank you for your letter dated 7 March 2008 attaching comments of the Joint Coordinating Committee of the Group of 77 and China and the Non-Aligned Movement on my report on revised estimates relating to the strengthening of the Department of Political Affairs (A/62/521).

Please find attached a response from the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. B. Lynn Pascoe, to your original letter of 6 March 2008 (see annex). I endorse the contents of this response, and I hope that the clarifications provided will assist your members in their deliberations. Additional questions raised can be addressed through the Fifth Committee, and the Secretariat will provide information as may be required.

I believe that the specific points on language can be dealt with through the Fifth Committee, and the Under-Secretary-General and his staff will be on hand to respond to additional questions during these meetings.

I look forward to continuing to work closely with you and your members on the strengthening of the Department of Political Affairs and on all other matters.

(*Signed*) **Ban** Ki-moon

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Annex

11 March 2008

I wish to thank you for your letter dated 6 March 2008 reflecting the views of the Joint Coordinating Committee of the Group of 77 and China and the Non-Aligned Movement. As you requested, your letter has been circulated as a document of the sixty-second session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 128, and the same will be done for this response. These letters will now become an integral part of the discussions on this item in the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly. The Secretary-General and I remain appreciative of the support of the Joint Coordinating Committee for the strengthening of the Department of Political Affairs and recognize your commitment to urgently improving the United Nations capacity to prevent and resolve conflicts, which is a better investment than dealing with the costly aftermath of war.

Mandates

As you state in your letter, the core mandate of the Department of Political Affairs stems from the Charter of the United Nations, specifically Articles 1, 33 and 99, and subsequent General Assembly and Security Council documents and resolutions which have confirmed this important function, including document A/46/882 and General Assembly resolutions 47/120 and 57/337. Other pertinent mandates are listed in document A/62/521.

You raise a number of important issues in your letter and I want to assure your members that we will take their concerns into account, as we have sought to do throughout this consultation process. Most significantly, I want to make clear that the proposals contained in A/62/521 do not in any way attempt to expand on the role and function of the Department of Political Affairs as established in the above-mentioned mandates; they are proposals to strengthen the effectiveness of the Department in the delivery of its already assigned functions — the effort is to make the Department both more effective and active in carrying out its mandates. We have also taken note of the need for more interchange between the Department and the General Assembly, and I look forward to discussing modalities for such interaction with you and your members on a continuing basis.

As we have stated previously, the primary responsibility for conflict prevention lies with Member States. It is with this understanding that the Department of Political Affairs works closely with Member States and regional organizations within its mandates. In Africa, for instance, the advances made in resolving conflicts are largely through the efforts of African States and regional organizations such as the African Union. It is on this basis that we have requested additional resources to strengthen the office in Addis Ababa and to strengthen our cooperation with the African Union and its member States in some of the peacemaking initiatives being undertaken by the continent's leaders.

Regional offices

One core issue for your membership is the proposal on regional offices for the Department of Political Affairs. To be clear, these offices would be opened only with the prior consent of the host country and all countries in the region and an appropriate mandate, as established by Member States, on a case-by-case basis.

These offices would be established, over time and only if requested, as special political missions. The offices would be either co-located or closely aligned with regional and subregional organizations or United Nations entities to provide the necessary support and to leverage synergies and cooperation. I would also assure the members of the Joint Coordinating Committee that these offices will not have an extraterritorial mandate, and that they would be tailored to the specific needs of the region. There is no set formula for how these offices would conduct their work.

As your membership is aware, the Department of Political Affairs has established two regional offices in the past, the United Nations Office for West Africa, which was opened in Dakar in 2001, and the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia in Ashgabat, which was opened in 2007, after five years of consultations. In both cases, regional Member States and regional organizations were duly consulted and gave consent, and the host Governments assisted in the establishment of the offices.

If and when a new office is proposed, we will, as a part of the consultation process, provide the information requested in your letter, including draft terms of reference, proposed mandates, proposed interactions with existing United Nations and regional entities, reporting cycles, and relevant mandates for cross-cutting issues.

Please note that the list of potential offices given in A/62/521 was only indicative, and there is no specific request for funding regional offices in the document.

Geographic representation and gender balance

In considering staffing, we will give priority to women and men from underrepresented countries — consistent with the Secretary-General's commitments to Member States to meet the targets established by the General Assembly for both gender and geography. The strengthening of the Department of Political Affairs will allow us to bring in a sizable number of young officers at the P-2 and P-3 levels. We intend to source this staff, to the extent possible, from the national competitive examination rosters — which, by definition, are of persons from underrepresented Member States. We will also seek to improve geographic diversity within the Department.

Structure of the regional divisions

With regard to the regional divisions, it is apparent that a number of your members are concerned about the proposals for how they are to be subdivided into smaller units. The creation of subsections within the regional divisions was intended as a basis for assigning resources and as a bureaucratic and budgetary mechanism to divide workloads equitably. Nevertheless, the Department has taken note of the concerns raised by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and your members and we have also registered the more general comments with regard to the need to examine issues rather than specific countries as the basis for a division of labour. We have decided to continue the current practice of using flexible teams rather than dividing each regional division into formal sections and units.

In the West Asia Division, staff would ensure due coverage of Security Council mandates under the following agenda items: The situation in the Middle East; The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question; and The situation concerning Iraq. They would also ensure due coverage of General Assembly mandates under the following agenda items: Question of Palestine; The situation in the Middle East; Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance; Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations; and Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations. The work of the Division would include all tracks of the Middle East peace process.

Policy planning and cross-cutting issues

Your members query the dedication by the Department of Political Affairs of increased time and more staff to thematic and cross-cutting issues, particularly those that are dealt with by other relevant United Nations bodies or that do not have an explicit mandate from the General Assembly, as conflict prevention does. Several points are worth making in this regard. First, our increasing awareness of the complex nature of peace and security requires us to pay attention to the specific dimensions of a growing number of cross-cutting issues as they pertain to peace and security. Acting at the request of many Member States, the Department also needs to address certain problems that are shared across borders and regions. The Department does not seek to duplicate knowledge or capacity that exists elsewhere in the system but it requires a basic ability to channel that knowledge in a timely and targeted way.

Second, the quest for greater coherence and synergy across the United Nations system results in more, not less, demand on the Department for political advice and inputs, particularly from United Nations bodies that have technical mandates in cross-cutting areas but may lack the political knowledge to deliver on those mandates in a manner that is sensitive to the situation on the ground or to intergovernmental concerns. Decisions by Member States to create new bodies that cover cross-cutting issues, such as the Peacebuilding Commission, the Peacebuilding Support Office and the Peacebuilding Fund (General Assembly resolutions 60/180 and 60/287), also result in more, not less, demand upon the Department, since the outputs and decisions of those bodies must include political inputs. For instance, the Department is asked for advice on funding decisions taken by the Peacebuilding and Democracy Funds, to ensure that the funding contributes to shared objectives.

Many of these cross-cutting issues are the subject of regular debates in the General Assembly and other legislative bodies, as well as expectations of the Secretary-General to develop a position and advise Member States on the impact of such cross-cutting issues on peace and security. The Department of Political Affairs is the primary source of advice in this regard, and must be equipped accordingly.

Conclusions

I hope that the clarifications provided in this letter will assist your members during your discussions on this important issue. Additional questions raised by your members will, of course, be addressed through the deliberations of the Fifth Committee, and through the provision of supplementary information.

The specific points on language set out in your letter can be dealt with in the context of the Fifth Committee's discussions, and I and my staff will be on hand to provide additional clarifications during your meetings.

(*Signed*) B. Lynn **Pascoe**
Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs